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On the Common Origin of Music and Philosophy: Plato, Nietzsche, and Benjamin

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Abstract The essay shows the common ground between music and philosophy from the origin of Western philosophy to the crisis of metaphysical thinking, in particular with Nietzsche and Benjamin. At the beginning, the relationship between philosophy and music is marked by the hegemony of the word on the sound. This is the nature of the Platonic idea of music. With Nietzsche and Benjamin this hegemony is denied and a new vision of the relationship becomes possible. The sound is the origin both of language and of music. In thinking about this origin, philosophy shows that “thinking about music” is “thinking in music”, and that this thinking is the origin of philosophy itself.

Keywords Origin · Tragedy · Sound · Language · Dionisos · Dodecaphony

1. The philosophical question concerning the relationship between philosophy and music is grounded on the horizon of meaning that includes within itself the surpassing of Socratism and Platonism in the Western Philosophical tradition. With this expression we indicate a radical reconsideration, a re-thinking of the perspective that precedes Socratism and Platonism aiming at a surpassing that would re-comprehend them in their own root. This re-thinking includes both the borders of that horizon of meaning and the meaning of the relationship between

philosophy and music. The Platonic and Socratic perspective is synthesized in *Phaedo* (60d–61d). Socrates, questioned by Cebes over why, locked in a dungeon and a few days away from his death, he composed a hymn in honour of Apollo and some verses inspired by Aesop’s fairy tales, answers that he did that in order to answer to a recurrent dream telling him: “Socrates, make music.”

Why does Socrates answer to the dream’s call by composing hymns and poetry, and not the inarticulate sound of music? Why can his soul not find peace and rest in the autonomy of pure sound, but rather in the creation of verses accompanied by music, which in this case is the servant of words? The answer is implicit in the consideration proposed by the Platonic Socrates: he thought that the dream was inciting him to continue his journey on the path of philosophy, and that to *make music* meant to *make philosophy* since *philosophy is the greatest music in the world*.

Answering to the dream’s invitation of making music by composing words and music corresponds to the vision of the *Phaedo* (continued in the *Sophist*) according to which the philosopher participates ontologically (*Phaedo* 101c; see also *Parmenides* 132c–d) to the being-in-itself of the world at the level of intelligible notions (*logoi*) and of the subsequent cognitive imitation (not a doxomimetic imitation) (*Sophist* 267e) grounded on the same relations of Being and on the mutual *participation* of ideal essences. This ontological and cognitive participation is expressed at the dialectical level by the philosopher who, through his reasoning, embraces the proper nature of that which is (*Sophist* 253d–254a). Language, which since it operates dialectically is both cognitive and communicative, will turn philosophy to the highest level of the human realm. Music cannot perform the task of expressing truthfully a thing, a fact, or an action carried out by the imitative nature of language (*Cratylus* 423b–d). Music can imitate reality and

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grasp the essence of things only if accompanied by word and singing (*Cratylus* 423e).

The only true possibility to recognize in music the highest philosophy is to accompany melodic singing with cithara and lyre, words with harmony and rhythm (*Republic*, 398d–399d); this marks the destiny of music in its relation to philosophy. Apollo overcomes Marsyas.

The history of thought on music is related to the development of philosophical reflection on the relation between music and words. The interplay between music and philosophy can be understood through this relation. The Platonic Socrates, the father of Western metaphysics, planted this problematic seed; Schopenhauer was the first who showed the signs of decadence of this plant, and who proposed an alternative.

In his *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) Schopenhauer writes that music has an essential mimetic property. It participates of the essence of the world not because it provides a model or a representation but because, being a representational art, expresses the Will itself in its resonant and sonorous objectification. Music *reveals* the Will, and doesn't need any word to accomplish this. Word would neither add nor subtract anything to the proper character of music, that is, to be expression and participation of the essence of the world: the Will.

The fundamental § 52 builds an essential relation between music and the world, in which music represents the supreme level of the objectification of the Will and of the life and aspirations of man. There's no need for this revelation to use words or language, even when music accompanies words and singing. Melody, detaching itself from the language of reason, follows *its own expressive path* and its own constructive process, tells us the secret history of the Will illuminated by reflection. Melody reveals the deepest secrets of the Will and of sentiment, distancing itself from concepts that are sterile and impotent, when it comes to express and reveal the most intimate essence of the world. Music can reveal this essence and a deep knowledge of it because it is a language that reason doesn't comprehend and that makes concepts powerless. This is why, according to Schopenhauer, those who try to force music into words and to adapt music to events make an absurd demand. They are trying to force music to speak a language that is not its own. The musical genius, instead, doesn't reproduce musically the phenomenon, and allows music to speak its language, which is the direct image of the Will in itself. This is the only way in which poetry or theatrical representation can accompany music in its expressive and constructive journey, revolving around the manifestation of the immediate Will. Schopenhauer shifts the philosophical reflection from the imitative-representational paradigm (asking *what music says* and *signifies* as it accompanies the word in its encounter with the

phenomenal world) to the revelation-expressive paradigm (*what music says is how it says it*, overcoming the simple level of the sensible effect to reach the superior level of the connection between human thought and Will as essence of the world).

Schopenhauer emancipates music from the discursive *logos* and the conceptual reason that support the mimetic arts, leading it back to its own non-conceptual language, to its specific matter (sounds) that alone can express the intimate essence of the world. Since philosophy is the exact repetition and enunciation of the world, the relation between music and the philosopher is established at the level of the Will, and not at the level of Representation. This relation emerges explicitly in the articulation of sound, in its becoming a melody integrated with the harmonic principle. Music and philosophy both stem from the immediacy of the Will, differentiated from each other in the objective manifestation of their emergence: philosophy, as *enunciation* and *repetition* according to concepts, elevates itself to the highest levels of its objectification freeing itself from all the interests of the Will to become the source of art (§ 27); music, as the *immediate expression of the Will through sound*, is the specific matter capable of providing an immediate intuition of the World in its effects.

The young Nietzsche will follow Schopenhauer's path, and in a radical way will bring the reflection on the relation between music and philosophy beyond the Socratic and Platonic levels of the *logos*. In his *The Greek Musical Drama* (1870) Nietzsche blames the history of music for having composed music for the eyes and not for the ears. The expressive capacity of music has found its territory in literary music (music to be read, Nietzsche says), that marks a decadence in taste and the oblivion of the essential element that must be comprehended about music. It is the element that music shares with poetry, but that is hidden under the blanket of affection, erudition, of heterogeneous and sentimental meanings that wrap both the musical and poetic element.

When art is turned into a *divertissement*, the spectator is not participating in its process. On the contrary, he is alienated in his attempt to flee from anxiety and the boredom of existence. His attention is focused on the plot and the development of the action. The values expressed and represented by the detachment and the identity of the actors (the triumph on the scene of the *principium individuationis*), obliterated the Dionysian element that the Athenian public kept within its soul in the moment in which approached tragedy. The Athenian public preserved the original wonder caused by the musical drama, in which the enjoyment was grounded on the fragile terrain in which the faith in the indissolubility and rigidity of the individual was weakened. This element was united with the placing into parentheses of the *logos apophantikos* and of the

conceptual and representational motive of the linguistic content of drama. This was possible because the public participated of the original and essential principle of tragedy, that is, the chorus as expression of the Dionysian spirit. The poet looked at the characters on the scene from the comprehensive and musical point of view of the chorus, and the Athenian public, forgetting the image proposed by the text and by the dialectic between the protagonists on the scene, participated in the unison choral music adhering to the Dionysian *pathos*, thus surpassing the lyrical level of the symbolic representation.

According to Nietzsche, the modern opera must be surpassed in its being comprehended within the lyrical level, that originated in the Socratic–Platonic moment in which the poetic word was put into music in order to adhere to its meaning, and to tell us stories and sentiments in their symbolic and mimic aspect. Returning to the Dionysian moment of the origin of music and of the essence of tragedy means returning to ethical thought, which is radically antithetic to Christian and Romantic thought, rooted in the communion of music and poetry. The true Greek music of tragedy was purely vocal, expressing the natural connection between spoken language and sung language in the deep unity of word and sound. This is the moment that we must find again, a moment that was lost in melodramatic opera and in its lyrical aspect.

In order to realize the ancient ethics of tragedy we must find, through a *serious philosophy*, music as a universal language that immediately touches the heart, and we must place the word in its proper position, that in lyrical drama acts only on the symbolic and conceptual world. Opera and melodrama do not allow the rediscovery of that forgotten origin. Only instrumental music could revive again those lost sounds aiming at a new and reborn unity of sound and word in a time that is yet to come.

In § 6 of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1876), melodramatic opera goes from music to images that are silent about the Dionysian content. This music, by accepting the Apollonian element in its images and concepts forgets the original and orgiastic element, although this element remains, revolving around Apollo. The modern musical drama stops at the phenomenon of lyricism, that symbolizes the Will. It offers an image of the Will while remaining detached from it, like an imperturbable solar eye. Lyricism, however, maintains the original spirit of music, while music, in its being absolutely without limits, needs neither image nor concept, although it *tolerates* them. Everything has already been said in music and only music can say it. Lyricism can only repeat symbolically, in a partial and non-exhaustive way, what is situated beyond every appearance and every language: the deep sense of the unity of word and sound that was born in the chorus of Aeschylus and vanished in Socratic and Platonic knowledge and in the tragedy of

Euripides. We can find again the mirroring of the Dionysian man, and see ourselves, as Satyrs, transformed through the fracture of the individual and the unification with the original being, thus reaching the realization of undemonstrated knowledge through re-thinking and re-participating to the chorus as spectators. Greek vocal music realized this ideal in the tragic choir; modern instrumental music can travel on this path toward this original scene to regain the word in its sonorous essence.

Nietzsche proposes a complete philosopher capable of regaining in his thought the music that the modern musical drama has lost, against the philosopher of the sole intellect that follows the Socratic and Platonic matrix, the *artifex* of dialogue that answers the call of the dream setting words into music. These words are poems that provide sense and value to an unhappy, wounded and never healed existence. This is the philosopher that embodies only one aspect of the Greek world, that is, the Apollonian clarity that rejects every other element. In order to regain thought within music, and to think in music, a re-conciliation between Apollo and Dionysus is needed. It is a re-conciliation between the immobile and full vision of Apollonian beauty and the expression of the enigmas and terrors of the world of tragic music. The figurative strength of Apollonian art was expressed in the rhythmical character of music, in the architectural moment of sounds that were elaborated by the paradigmatic instrument of the cithara, an instrument that allows the mouth to express in singing the figurative sense of music. The pathetic character of Dionysian music resided in the unsettling strength of sound and in the absolutely incomparable world of harmony that was expressed by the *aulos*, the polyphonic wind instrument used by Marsyas in the lost battle against Apollo.

In § 2 of his *The Dionysian Vision of the World* Nietzsche writes that the secret of Nature is revealed with Dionysian clarity in music. This clarity dissolves every illusion and every appearance of truth of the concept. The transfigured world of the eye, that was artificially created by the illusory gesture of the *plastic* and *figurative* trait, has as protagonists the epic and the lyrical poem, the sculptor and the painter, who encapsulate the formative trait within the plastic and figurative representation and within the conceptual word. This artistic world is submitted to the *figurative cult of the Apollonian civilization* and its ethics, which is the ethics of *measure* and *limit*, traits that must be known and communicated. This world produces only artistic means and not *art for culture*. The burden of *measure* has produced a screen that hides the truth in its natural and non-conceptual dimension. Constriction and veil, measure and limit must be penetrated by the ecstatic sound of Dionysus in which the *excess of Nature*—excess of joy, pain, and knowledge—was manifested at once. This *excess* was revealed as a Dionysian truth. Thanks to this

penetration rhythm and the subsequent architecture were dissolved and turned into the participation to ecstatic sound. This was the moment in which the instrumental voice was produced. Its *pathos* and autonomous principle allowed the birth of harmony, in whose movement we can immediately understand the will and the dance of Dionysus.

What Apollo formed and therefore hid could emerge again from the ecstatic inebriation that blanched the gods in front of the knowledge of Silenus. This was the birth of tragic thought, in the spirit of music that found its ambit in the excess of instrumental voice and in the texture of choral harmony. *Excess* revealed itself as *truth*, a truth that comes into being, in this unveiling, as *excess*. The highest possibility of existence is created only through the penetration of the Dionysian element into the orderly world of the Apollonian: Apollo and Dionysus are reunited, and that unveiled truth is resolved in illusion, and the instinctive inebriation of Nature is now *symbolized*. This is the birth of the time of the *mask*. In § 4 of *The Dionysian Vision of the World* Nietzsche writes that we must find again, behind this mask, music itself, on the terrain of excess, which in another part of his text he calls *irreducible rest* that no language can define or encapsulate and that is on the one hand the limit of poetry and on the other the non-figurative expression of harmony. Harmony, insofar it is the irreducible rest, speaks about the Will, beyond the sphere of the concept and its potentialities, only through sound. Sound dissolves the world of appearance within its primordial unity beside the symbolic unity of language, and maintaining within itself the instant in which sound becomes music in the inebriation of sentiment in the scream. Sound that becomes music preserves the instant of the scream and expresses it in the expressive construction of instrumental voice. The word also preserves this sound. The word preserves in its memory the instant of the scream that marks the passing of sound into music, thus preserving it in the instant that precedes its own symbolic and conceptual opening. The word preserves the sound only for a moment. The sound disappears in the dynamics of the symbol, in the strengthening of sentiment and in the succession of words and the development of conceptual thought. The sequence of words and sounds acts on us, but thought remains distant and indifferent. The memory of the instant in which the union of Dionysus and Apollo in the musical substratum that establishes the spirit of tragedy took place has been lost.

Unveiling the sonorous substratum of harmony, unleashing the instrumental voice as a musical element freed from every constriction, heeds again a scream which is more powerful and more immediate than any gaze and image, and leads to thought through the dimension of listening. This is the thought that annihilates the individual and unifies nature in its will to express itself. Philosophy finds again the memory of its own beginning at the level of

musical art in the *irreducible rest* (as unity of word and sound), in the *construction* of, and *participation* to, *absolute music* that repeat at a higher level the common birth of music and philosophy in the abysmal depths of Dionysus.

2. In his preparatory writings to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (*Trauerspiel and Tragedy* and *On the Meaning of Language in Trauerspiel and Tragedy*) Walter Benjamin leads us through the middle ground between *Trauerspiel* and tragedy, a territory on the border characterized by a passing, i.e., a *passing marked by a crossing* that defines a border, a specific difference, and also an essential and genealogical connection, an extreme experience. Benjamin writes: “Perhaps the deepest meaning of the Tragic doesn’t reveal only art, but the ambit of history. But at least one must suppose that the Tragic indicates both a border of the realm of art and the border in the sphere of history” (*Trauerspiel und Tragödie*, p. 133).

In 1916 Benjamin thought that the time of history— infinite in every direction, but unfulfilled in every moment—knew its greatness only in the Tragic: this greatness is a “something more” that exceeds every specific chronological situation, it is an exceeding category that no empirical event, no contingent representation can encapsulate. It is a “something more” that is an idea.

One should not only analyze the *Trauerspiel* but also to see its passing, follow the passing of time of the *Trauerspiel* as intimately connected with the mirroring nature of representation, and recognize it as a *repetition* of the represented at a higher level. This repetition activates the distance between image and reflected image—signifier and signified—but, at the same time, opens up itself to the distancing movement of the *Trauerspiel*.

This distance must be bridged, somehow, in a necessary and inconclusive repetition, an *instant* before the expectation of tragedy, an instant after the *rest* of the *Trauerspiel*. Thus Benjamin writes: “The *Trauerspiel* is the artistic application of the historical idea of repetition; therefore its problem is completely different from that of tragedy. And even if the relation of tragedy with art remains problematic, even if tragedy is more and less than a form of art, it is certain that it is a closed form. Its temporal character is exhausted and formed in the dramatic form. The *Trauerspiel* instead is intrinsically unconcluded” (*Trauerspiel und Tragödie*, pp.136–137).

Repetition as passing, insofar as it is a crossing of the mirror of representation aimed at recapturing what has been lost in the representation itself: the image as such. *Repetition as recapitulation*: in order to inject a movement into the historical idea of repetition—to *be artistically applied*—and, finally, to attain a critical *comprehension* of the exceeding dimension of representation. The unfulfilled rest of the *Trauerspiel* goes beyond the merely mirroring

image and doesn't localize itself conclusively either in the space of the *Trauerspiel* itself or within its dramatic time (that is, within the space–time of the representation): “The law of a superior life exists in the restricted space of earthly existence, and everybody plays and acts until death puts an end to the show, to continue in another world the greater representation of the same act; *Repetition* is the basis on which the law of the *Trauerspiel* stands” (*Trauerspiel und Tragoedie*, p.136).

Benjamin tries to identify the *rest in excess* (the rest of the unfulfilled element in the *Trauerspiel*) whose movement is the crossing that binds together mourning and its farewell, that casts a light on the transitory character of the Tragic, *on the path of the transformation of the word*, aiming at a higher understanding, eventually complete but nevertheless continuously repeated: the grasping of the *time of music*.

Tragedy is situated in the passage from historical time to dramatic time; music is the becoming of the rest of the *Trauerspiel* in which the dramatic time is abandoned. In the crossing of repetition music distances itself from the vision of the mirror and its time, aiming at the comprehension of the primitive element that only music can make perspicuous: that is, the common and joint origin of the word and the Tragic in tragedy. Music, as the *rest* of the *Trauerspiel*, in the movement of ascension of representation toward image, gives back the immediately tragic *origin of the word* (pure word), that is, of the first condition of the musical symphonic principle on the side of the Tragic. The young Benjamin is clear about this point: “In tragedy the word and the Tragic are born together, simultaneously, time after time in the same place. *Pure word is immediately tragic*. The word that operates according to its pure meaning becomes tragic. The word as active and pure subject of its meaning is tragic” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragoedie*, p. 138).

In the young Benjamin the *rest* of the mirror doesn't find a further visibility, but a space–time of pure sound that *must be listened to*, that has experiences, and is a subject, and at the same time is the protagonist of the transformation of the pure word into the word of the *Trauerspiel*. *The original sound of Nature becomes the pure sound of sentiment*, keeping this duplicity without resolving it. Benjamin is determined to keep this contradiction, because this is the only way to grasp the common origin of tragedy, *Trauerspiel* and music: “The word in transformation is the linguistic principle of the *Trauerspiel*. There is sentimental life of the word, in which it is purified, in the sense that what was originally a sound of nature becomes the pure sound of sentiment” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragoedie*, p. 138).

Thus it will be possible to outflank the stiffening of language within the sphere of meaning and communication, and, above all, it will be possible to clarify the *essential duplicity of the word*, that is, its vital and

productive double sense shown by the tautological identity between linguistic essence and spiritual essence. This *double sense* is placed between pure sound and symphonic sound, between a sentiment that perceives the rest and a ghastly lament of the *Trauerspiel*: “In the *Trauerspiel* the two metaphysical principles of repetition are connected, and they represent its metaphysical order: cyclical process and repetition, one circle and two. Because it is the circle of sentiment, that closes itself within music, and it is the duplicity of the word and of its meaning, that destroys the stillness of the profound yearning, and spreads mourning throughout Nature” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragoedie*, p. 139).

Benjamin's thought on the origin of the *Trauerspiel* is rooted in the concept of transition. *Transition, crossing, transformation*: these are the words that go through the contrast between sound and language, and that overcome the spectral character of the representation, dissolving its pretences of redemption and leading music to its original meaning: *pure sound*. “The contrast between sound and meaning in the *Trauerspiel* remains something ghastly, terrible, its nature is possessed by language and becomes the prey of an infinite sentiment, like Polonius, who is seized by folly because he develops his reflections. But representation must find redemption, and for the *Trauerspiel* the mystery that redeems is music: the rebirth of sentiments in a ... nature” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragoedie*, p. 139).

The young Benjamin thinks about the fundamental oscillation between word and music, image and reflected image, sound and meaning within the ambit of passing and crossing. These dualities all have the same essence, which is not very distant from the essence of translation, conceived by Benjamin as a continuous space of transformation and transposition.

In this perspective music *becomes*; far from its opposite, rigidity, music must be grasped in the instant preceding its articulation, and in order to better explain its necessary articulation and construction, it must be understood in its original tragic element.

Just as in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and in his early writings and fragments, Benjamin would conclude that the birth of tragedy, beside being the origin of representation, is intrinsically connected to the initial spirit of music. This initial spirit takes back language to its original state, in which music and language are one (F. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragments*). This is the stage in which music returns to a condition that has nothing to do with any imitation of nature, in the free play of *pathos* that, as Nietzsche writes, makes us *indifferent to a conceptually understandable content* but opens the possibility of *having a musical intuition of things*, of *continuously perceiving the Dionysian symbolism* (*Posthumous Fragments*).

Nietzsche writes that we can comprehend again *the original affinity between music and tragedy*, and turn music into a possibility to think the world in the most universal form of being, i.e., the *Tragic* (*Posthumous Fragments*). We can do this only if we leave behind the idyllic illusion of the modern and decadent Christian opera, encapsulated within the neo-Latin scheme (*Posthumous Fragments*). Thus we have to go beyond the idyllic faith that through passion turns man into a naïve and primitive listener, in order to regain the tragic contact with the *substratum of sound that is comprehensible notwithstanding the diversity of languages*. This is the contact between Dionysus and Apollo that shows that the root of the word is situated beyond the *principium individuationis*.

Benjamin draws inspiration from these themes, and he repeats them. *Music is in the becoming*. The pure sound of tragic time becomes music, as language of pure sentiment, as *unfolding* of the word, as lament and mourning in the *passing*. Benjamin writes: “The *Trauerspiel* is not grounded on the basis of language, its foundation lies on the conscience of that unity of language within sentiment that unfolds in the word. In this unfolding the lost sentiment expresses the lament of mourning. But this must be dissolved and resolved: precisely on the basis of that preliminary unity it passes into the language of pure sentiment, into music” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie*, p. 139).

Music is understood as *rest* through the comprehension of the *Trauerspiel*. The comprehension of the joint origin of word and sound takes place beyond the folds of signification and representation, precisely in its original character of *rest*: “While in tragedy the eternal rigidity of the spoken word rises, the *Trauerspiel* harvests the infinite resonance of its sound” (*Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie*, p. 140).

Thus, also according to Benjamin, the *original character of the rest*, that no concept can grasp, and that the *representational style* cannot express, is situated in the Dionysian depth of music, as the origin of word and writing is situated in the alphabetical order.

3. *Moses und Aron* by Arnold Schönberg is the work that perfectly marks the space-time of this rest. The two protagonists of this work of 1932 undertake the transformation from the original sound of nature (Moses) to the pure sound of sentiment (Aaron). The *Sprechgesang* of Moses is the final point of the passing in the crossing, which started in the melodramatic symphonic element of Aaron. In this double movement toward rest that representation cannot grasp there is all the tragic element of spoken singing. Pure word, which is immediately tragic, goes back to lament through the opposite direction of the *Trauerspiel*.

Aaron, the key figure of the dramatic principle, carries the mourning of sentiment, thus introducing it in the world of art. *Moses* follows the traces of the tragic word vocalizing in a high pitch until he reaches the intensity of the single note in its purity and immediacy. He bears the fall of the sensible note, of the disappearance of the chord of the dominant, he loses the path that leads to the tonal center. By standing on the interval of the ascending fourth of diminished fifth, *Moses* re-conquers the tragic subjectivity that was ideally realized in its time. Thus we are led on the threshold of the origin of music. This origin is not only a pointillist singularity but also movement, passing, crossing, metamorphosis.

Moses is the Tragic; *Aron* is the *Trauerspiel*: they show the density of the contrast between sound and meaning, they dangle within the conflict between image and reflected image, and through their singing they bridge all their distance: they live, each within his own pole, the irreducible moment of the *rest*, where the dramatic time becomes the *time of music*, within the continuous oscillation between happiness and destiny. Schönberg’s work shows the dynamic of the time of music: it exploits its fundamental oscillatory character and magisterially grasps it through the continuum of *transpositions*: the non-representational character of the repetition, lived within the ambit of the suppression of the hierarchical structure of the tonal form, in the application of the contrapuntal technique, in the radical re-definition of the intervals. Benjamin would say, in his essay on the translator, within a continuous space of *translation of the series*. Thus *Moses und Aron* occupies the ambit that art has opened between tragedy and *Trauerspiel*, living their conflict, bearing their mourning, accepting the stall of redemption.

In “Benjaminian” terms, *Moses und Aron* questions the fulfilment of word and music in art (thus art itself) at the level of *listening*, and not at the level of visual and meaningful representation. The becoming of music through a deeply perceived and heard lament is turned backwards aiming at grasping in the listening the “*eternal rigidity of the spoken word*” that characterizes Tragedy and that is the source of every image and refusal of the notion of evidence *without being reducible to a determined representation* (the ineffable dimension of the name). This is done without neglecting to gather the infinite resonance of its sound in the *Trauerspiel*, showing the contours of that inconclusive essential rest as the sound essence of music in Aaron’s melodramatic singing.

In the temporal arc between Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Origin of the Baroque Drama* the only possible music and necessary music seems to be the music expressed by the journey of the New Music, from the emancipation of dissonance, through Dodecaphony, to serial music. We finally understand why we have to live, beside Adrian Leverkühn’s piano in his room, listening to its *diabolus in musica*.